

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested.

1. Examiner has rejected claims 27 – 33 and 36 as being anticipated by the Sanocki reference. Sanocki teaches a fire barrier material which combines a non-woven mat of fibres and a metal-oxide coating. Applicant points out that the metal oxide coating is only applied to one surface, or a portion of a surface, of the mat and does not infiltrate the mat.

In contrast, in the present invention, the fibre mat (or matrix, as described in the specification) is impregnated throughout with the particles, as opposed to only being coated with the particles. Claim 27 includes the limitation that the particles are "interspersed" within the fibre matrix. Claim 27 has been further amended to include the limitation that the ceramic particles are impregnated within the seal. The combined limitations of "interspersed" and "impregnated" are now present in claim 27. Accordingly, it is submitted that claim 27 and its dependent claims are patentably distinct from Sanocki.

2. Examiner has rejected claims 27 – 32 and 36 as being anticipated by the Numamoto (JP – 3-28288) reference. Applicant has amended claim 27.

Numamoto teaches a gas sealing member which combines ceramic fibres to give the seal a cushion characterisitic, ceramic powder bound with an inorganic binder to the fibres and a platinum group metal. This last element is an essential element of the seal as the platinum group metal causes catalytic combustion of a fuel gas which permeates the seal. In other words, the seal functions to contain a fuel gas by physically containing the gas and also by combusting any fuel gas which infiltrates the seal (see page 5, first paragraph).

Claim 27 has been amended to exclude any catalytic material in the seal. This amendment is supported by the specification. The description of the seals of the present invention consistently

describe a seal which functions only as a physical barrier to contain gases. There is no reference to any catalytic material or any other element which reacts with or otherwise alters the contained gases. It is apparent from the specification that the inventors had in their possession the invention as claimed in amended claim 27 (see MPEP 2163.02). The microphotographs of the seal of the present invention, which forms part of the disclosure, shows seals which consist of ceramic fibres and particles, without any catalytic element. Furthermore, it is implicit and apparent from the written description that the seals of the present invention function only as a physical barrier and that no catalytic or chemical process is contemplated as part of the sealing function.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing remarks and amendments, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance and allowance thereof is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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